

# IS GOD A WHITE RACIST?

AN APOLOGETIC DIALOGUE

CAMERON TRIGGS

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>BACK STORY</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>PART 1</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>PART 2</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>FURTHER READING</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>ABOUT THE AUTHOR</b>	<b>27</b>

## Back Story

Walter and Charles are fraternity brothers and childhood friends. During their collegiate years, they were nearly inseparable. However, after college, they parted ways to establish lives of their own. Walter became the African-American Studies Director for a community college in Chicago, while Charles followed the footsteps of his father and became a pastor in a suburb of Marietta, Georgia. Due to the conditions of professional adult life, and the distance between them, they gradually grew apart. However, a mutual friend, and one of Walter's former students, joined Charles' church. During a discipleship class, this connection was discovered, and numbers were transferred. Charles called his estranged brother, and the two made plans to reunite and catch-up at their alma mater's annual Classic (rival college football game). The day after landing in the host city of the Classic, they planned to meet at Starbucks for a cup of coffee and conversation.

# PART 1

**Walter:** My man, Charlie! What's up player! Aw, man, I see your wife has been feeding you well, huh?! **(Walter grins impishly)**

**Charles (returning friendly shots while embracing his friend):** Man, please. You still don't want to see me on that field, though. I know you haven't lost your memory. How many Player of the Year awards did you get, my brother?

**Walter:** Oh, I remember man. You were awesome. I was your biggest fan. I was always the brain of the operation though.

**Charles:** You know what, I can't argue with that. Man, if you didn't help me pass Biology, I would have been playing the bench instead of the field.

**Walter (sits down):** Good times...Seems like yesterday. We are closing in on forty! I remember that was ancient to me a few years back! Whew...Well, hey, I ordered for us already. Black coffee is what you sent in the text, right?

**Charles (sits down across from Walter):** You bet. Thanks again for meeting with me. How is the family?

**Walter:** Doing well, real well. I can't complain at all. Life is great, wife is happy, and our third is on the way. Remember, on Facebook, I was telling you about my professor position teaching Jazz Studies? I got promoted to the Director of the African-American Studies Program last week.

**Charles:** Congrats, Walt. That is awesome! New job and a new baby!

**Walter:** Yea, I know! Hope it's a boy this time. And I have some interesting plans for the program as well. How 'bout Julia and the kids? How are they?

**Charles:** She is ok. After her bout with cancer, she has been extremely thankful. The kids are well too. The Lord has been truly gracious to us. He is so faith-

**Walter (interrupting Charles):** Hey, I remember how you and Julia met. Remember that club? The music, the scene, the atmosphere. That was when you could really dance. And Julia, she is a true fox. You two stuck together like glue!

**Charles:** Yea, I remember, Walt.

**Walter:** It took you a while to settle down though.  
**(Walter starts laughing)**

**Charles:** Sure did. I regret those times, Walt...

**Walter:** Relax, Chuck, every man has to sow his wild oats, right?

**Charles:** Not true. Marriage is-

**Walter (interrupting again, imitating Charles' deep voice):** Marriage is...Ok, Rev. I got it.

**Charles:** Walter?

**Walter:** What?

**Charles:** Let's cut to the chase.

**Walter:** Ok, please, cut.

**Charles:** Can I be honest, man?

**Walter:** Yea, what's on your mind?

**Charles:** I'm concerned about your...about your...

**Walter:** About my what, Chuck? My faith?

**Charles:** Yea. I know we had a wild past in college, but the things I see in your Facebook statuses, and the attitude you have towards God have been disturbing. We grew up in church, in my father's church to be exact.

**Walter:** You're not ready to go there with me, Chucky. Trust me, man, I have struggled with these issues, and it's better that you just leave it alone. I respect you continuing your father's legacy and making a profession for yourself, but if we continue this conversation it will just rattle your faith. This God of yours is fake and, and just...jus-

**Charles (interrupting Walter):** Hold on, Walter. Let's be respectful. I know how you get excited...

**Walter:** Humph...

**Charles:** We can dialogue earnestly, but let's keep our cool. I'm just concerned...



**Walter:** Ok, but remember you took it here. We could have talked football and cars for all I care. But let's go, Chuck. If the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob exists...Note I said, "IF He exists," He, She, or It is a pernicious, barbaric, blood thirsty racist.

**Charles:** Wow! Really?! Really, Walter? God, pernicious and a racist?

**(Starbucks employee yells: Black Coffee and a Caramel Latte!)**

**Walter:** Yes, really, but, hold on, let me get this order.

**Charles:** Ok, go ahead. I'm waiting to hear this...

**Walter:** Ha! Ok, jus a sec...

**(Walter returns)**

**Charles:** Thanks for paying. But, continue, I'm intrigued by your new thesis, Professor Walter.

**(Charles smiles before taking his first sip)**

**Walter:** Ok, let class begin. Take notes, Chuck.

**Charles:** Will do. I'm taking mental notes.

# PART 2

**Walter:** This all started about six years ago, Chuck. This is not an overnight metamorphosis. I really reasoned about this. I tried to reconcile how could a loving and powerful God be so unfair to people of color, and how could I, being a black man, follow a religion that enslaved us? A colleague of mine in the Philosophy Department really challenged my thinking. When he found out I was a “Christian”, he blatantly asked how. How could I follow a religion that supported slavery with exegesis from the “good book” itself? How could Jonathan Edwards, the so-called “Greatest American Theologian”, take on difficult philosophical issues, such as total depravity and irresistible grace, but never condemn slavery? Cotton Mather even argued that white people should teach their slaves that God has called them to be servants, and that they serve Jesus Christ while serving their masters. So, cotton-picking slaves served Christ while being beaten, hanged, raped, and whipped by white masters, right? These so-called “Christians” owned slaves as well. George Whitefield enslaved brothers too! Doesn’t that bother you, Chuck? Be real with me, man! It is that attitude of the church that projected books like, “The Negro as a Beast” by Charles Carrol! So, here we have a religion that is in direct opposition to our heritage and dignity.

**Charles:** Sigh...yea, Walt. I agree. Christians sin, sometimes grievously, against their own law. But what you just proposed is an ad hominem argument that is rather weak. Sure, the character of some Christians is corrupt, but Christianity as a whole can't be thrown out with the bath water. You wouldn't advise the government to dismantle the systems of law and justice because a few corrupt judges took bribes to sentence brothers to a life sentence or because crooked cops shot an innocent teenager by accident. You may have to reform the institution, but law and order is still needed. Interestingly, Christianity and the Church of Christ are the institutions that supplied the underlying worldview to abolish slavery. It is the Bible that states there is "neither slave nor free" in Galatians 3:28. Even in 1 Cor. 7:21, Paul states, "Are you a slave? Don't let that worry you—but if you get a chance to be free, take it." And, just to be clear, the slavery mentioned in the Bible is NOT the same slavery that happened in colonial America. The slavery mentioned in the Bible was primarily dealing with issues of debt and labor. While, in America, it was based on race, brutality, and man stealing, which God strictly prohibits. Exodus 21:16 states, "Kidnappers must be put to death, whether they are caught in possession of their victims or have already sold them as slaves."

The Bible has an underlying theme of equality and freedom in Christ. Simply put, the Christian God demands we love others as we love ourselves, and that we treat persons with respect because we are created in the image of God. It is the Bible that, in Philemon 16, encourages masters to treat slaves as “more than a slave, as a beloved brother...both in the flesh and in the Lord.” Why would a Divine White Racist inspire such texts!? Texts like these caused Methodists and Baptists to deem slavery contrary to the laws of God. And, while we are referencing books, it is only the Biblical worldview that influenced abolitionist writings like “The Bible against Slavery” by Theodore Weld. No other law, reason, or religion cured the disease of western slavery. It is only the Gospel that granted people the ability to transcend the moral depravity of slavery to affirm a universal dignity amongst all peoples. Without the universal and objective truth of the Bible, how could we hold slaveholders accountable? If morality was based on one’s own reasoning, what if the logic of two conflicted with the result being one person supporting slavery and the other condemning it? On what basis can they agree if both of them believe their thought and worldview as supreme, and that there is no knowledge outside of ourselves that holds us morally responsible? If natural autonomous reason wouldn’t do it, surely natural law wouldn’t be adequate.

Natural law only tells us what “is” not what “ought” to be. From mere observation, what tells us “How something should be”? Only the idea of the Bible, the idea that God created us equal, supplies a morality to dispose injustice and inequality. By what other principle did early Americans establish such a position? Was it economics? No way. Before the industrial revolution, slavery was the backbone of American capitalism and even more so after the industrial revolution of the Deep South. Was it science and Evolution? No, because it is the very thought that mankind evolves into a superior race/species that supplied the idea that blacks were savages, less than human, and beasts who were less cultured and insufficiently evolved compared to their European counter-parts.

**Walter:** Hold on, Chuck. The Bible never states, flat-out, that slavery is wrong! Not once. It takes extrabiblical knowledge to make that conclusion. Exodus 21 makes provision for slavery. Paul makes provision for slavery. “Slaves obey your masters.” It’s not just some Christian characters that “backslid”, but an institution that corrupts. It was three hundred years ago our forefathers were taken from the western coast of Africa as slaves. The people who dealt in the slave trade were Christians.

The name of a famous British slave vessel was "Jesus". The corrupt men who bought the slaves were Christians who quoted the Apostle Paul.

**Charles:** Yes, but we have to clarify terms and cultural boundaries here, Walt. The text that states, "Slaves obey your masters" is Ephesians 6:45. In its cultural context, slavery is not equivalent to the African Slave Trade of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

**Walter:** Slavery is slavery, Chuck. Don't split hairs on immorality.

**Charles:** No, let's be fair here. During the first century, in the Roman Empire, there was not a great difference between slaves and the average free person. Slaves were not diminished according to race, culture, or clothing. They were not societal outcasts or degraded in any inhumane sense. Of course, irregularities occurred, but every institution had its faults. In fact, from a financial standpoint, slaves made the same wages as freelance laborers and were not typically poor. Another great difference is slaves were rarely slaves for life. Most could buy themselves out of slavery.

Even in the Old Testament, slaves would typically go free after six years, this is referenced in Exodus 21:2 and Deuteronomy 15:12. Western slavery was far more brutal and typically known as “chattel” slavery. This is when the whole person is treated as impersonal property of the master. Also, western slavery was typically for life, race-based, and was started, and maintained, by kidnapping. However, the Bible harshly condemns kidnapping and trafficking slaves in 1 Timothy 1:9-11. Additionally, the Old Testament supplied provision for slaves. In fact, using the term “slave” is not even helpful in this instance. The portrait of slavery in the Bible represents the essence of indentured servant-hood.

**Walter:** See, you are proving my point. Slavery is wrong, but the Bible says it is ok. Slavery is never right. Slavery is evil, but the Bible does not articulate that.

**Charles:** It does not condemn slavery specifically, but it does intrinsically. And, remember, we are talking about two different forms of slavery.

**Walter:** Is slavery wrong? Yes or no?



**Charles:** It depends on the definition of slavery? I made these distinctions earlier, Walt. If you mean the “Kunta Kinte” slavery of Roots, then slavery is absolutely wrong. But, if some form of slavery absent of abuse, racism, and kidnapping existed then maybe it could be considered. However, that institution would not be slavery in the common sense of the Western mind, due to our cultural history. But, in some respect, certain types of slavery do exist. Workers are still obligated to obey bosses, credit card companies demand repayment with interest, and you should know that students take out massive school loans for education while having to work half their lives to pay them off. But are you challenging your community college or students for such measures? They are economically similar to ancient institutions of slavery in the Bible.

**Walter:** No, of course not. That is not slavery. But if slavery is wrong, why don't the biblical authors just say so?

**Charles:** Contrary to belief, slavery did not originate in the Bible. It was an institution of human society and history. Still, the Bible does not condone it any more than it does polygamy or divorce. Instead, the Bible establishes humane limits for an existing system.

Slaves were given a day of rest according to Exodus 20:10, which is better than most bosses I know now. Not only that, but Exodus 21:27 states that even if a slave's tooth was knocked out, the slave was to go free. Essentially, violence against slaves was radically strict and more humane than the way some people raise their children today! Besides, Walt, are you saying that because you don't like the history of slavery and the misfortune of some Christian history that God does not exist or that Jesus did not rise from the dead? Unless Jesus rose from the dead, slavery and the Bible are not issues. Unless God exists, why even take the Bible seriously? Keep the main thing the main thing, my friend. You have to first decide whether a Holy God exists who will judge your sins, whether Jesus died for your sins, rose from the dead, and is coming back again before you even dismiss other Christian teachings. There is a worldview issue here, Walt. You are not merely presenting a cultural critic of slavery. If God does not exist, how do you account for morality and equality of all peoples? How do you define purpose amongst a despaired people group? Do we honestly tell victims in Darfur that life is a mishap, and we will one day be spontaneously combusted by the sun? Do we tell our ancestors in slavery that God did not hear their prayers of deliverance, that, "Michael won't roll his boat ashore",

or that there is no cosmic justice for the ills of slavery?  
But, if God does exist, there is hope...

**Walter:** No, first of all, I'm an Agnostic.

**Charles:** How can you be agnostic? Your behavior states you are an atheist. You do not pray, attend church, or prescribe to any God. As you know, behavior is the truest indicator of belief. If you said you believed in gravity, but released grip of your caramel latte with hopes it would suspend in the air, I would question your sanity or your belief in gravity. As an Agnostic, you claim there is no evidence to confirm or disprove the existence of God. So, why not cover all your bets, Walt. Go to church here and there. Pray sometimes, just in case God is real!

**Walter:** He isn't.

**Charles:** So you are an Atheist. But if you are an Atheist how do you disprove God?

**Walter:** All we can know is from history. History is the method we can know and with which we can analyze the future. Not the Bible because the Bible is morally archaic. And stop referring to the Bible to defend the Bible and slavery! That is circular reasoning, you know that!

**Charles:** Well, you just used history to confirm the truth of history right? Circular reasoning is inevitable when one argues their ultimate worldview. Sadly, this may sound strange, but I am a Christian, and I believe the Bible. The Bible is true, and, this may appeal to you, it is actually a historic document written by eyewitnesses with exact dates, places, and times. Luke 1 is a simple demonstration that the author investigated the life of Jesus. In addition to that, it is the most documented ancient historic document. The Dead Sea Scrolls have shown the faithfulness and preservation of its translation...

**Walter:** Look, Indiana Jones, the Bible is just another book. But we know history repeats itself. History has shown that Christianity is corrupt, supports slavery, and that God is extremely unfair to people of color. How could a loving God allow millions of black slaves to suffer the way they did during slavery? If God is all-powerful and all loving, He must just love white people. Ethnic suffering has been gratuitous to say the least; not just amongst black people either. For example, the Jews have been constantly persecuted and killed. After such events like Auschwitz, how can Jews not ask, "Is God an anti-Semite?" Therefore, we have to ask whether "God is" on the grounds of history and crimes against humanity. And, if God exists, God is guilty of divine racism, to say the least.

The disproportioned suffering of ethnic groups has shown that God has taken sides. He is white and does not treat all people equally. Logically, God has to be the sum of His actions. The Old Testament is a narrative of God's actions: what he has done, is doing, and will do. And the Old Testament knows God is a divine bully. The problem of Scripture is not why suffering happens, but why it afflicts some people and not others. The issue is not the fact of suffering, but its distribution. Also, the enormity of ethnic suffering is monumental! The fact of the numbers of Jews and blacks in comparison to the total number of Jews and blacks who have been nearly exterminated raises the issue of divine racism at the level of suffering and death. We must conclude that God's hatred is not mere divine racism, but divine genocide! If we differentiate between positive and negative suffering, ethnic suffering is most definitely negative. There is no "all things work for the good" argument here. How does genocide and slavery work for the good of black people? Ethnic suffering has no value to increasing our well-being and surely is not for one's salvation. Ethnic suffering leads away from one's highest good! Am I right?

**Charles:** In some ways, yes. I am glad you take evil seriously! Really, I am.

But you do it inconsistently. I will get to that. But first, how can you exhaustively and empirically state suffering is particularly ethnic and has been historically distributed unjustly by a sovereign God? As a self-proclaimed Agnostic, who claims there is not enough evidence for the existence of God, how can you conclude such infinite and exhaustive knowledge about the history of suffering? Have not white people suffered? From 1530-1780, Muslim Africans enslaved Europeans, and that number totaled around one million. Therefore, was God a black racist?

**Walter:** Sounds like it to me. God has an identity crisis. He is too weak to prevent such evil against any ethnic group.

**Charles:** But if God does not exist, how do you account for evil? Matter of fact, how do we account for good? If there is not a personal God, then the universe is governed by chance and impersonal forces. However, forces and chance do not command a moral obligation, nor do they communicate standards. If there is no personal, absolute God that defines good by His character, how do we account for evil? It goes without saying: autonomous humanism reverts to man doing what is right in his or her own eyes or own mind. Still, such a premise is inadequate to state slavery is wrong, if reasoning and truth is relative to a person. How could we say ethnic suffering is wrong, if history has shown it to be the norm of humanity?

**Walter:** I see where you going with this. I agree atheism and agnosticism cannot answer every question, but neither can Christianity. In fact, Christianity only adds to the problem.

**Charles:** Christianity does have an answer, Walt. It is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God so loved the world (all people, of every tribe and tongue) that He gave His only begotten Son to appease the wrath we deserve from a Holy God by dying on a cross for anyone who believes. This shows God takes suffering very seriously. God, in the form of the Son, came and suffered for us, that we may have eternal life. It is here on earth that Christians face momentary afflictions for a greater glory. In our present suffering, we fellowship with the sufferings of Christ to know the power of His resurrection: that Jesus conquered death, and hope of life after is available, if we repent from the sins we have committed and trust in Jesus' perfect righteousness. Of course, all answers to suffering are not provided. But faith is the ability to persevere despite unanswered questions. All things are working for the good of the Christian and the Glory of God. Though the greater good may be unknown, it is not nonexistent. It would take the infinite knowledge of God to say there is absolutely no good reason for slavery or any other evil. And I am not defending such an evil practice.

But, I believe, on the last day, we will quote Joseph and say to past slave masters, "What you meant for evil, God meant for good." Perhaps it is through ethnic suffering that God preserved a remnant of Jews and Africans to redeem for eternity. I am not sure and you must honestly admit such ignorance as well. But I am sure Christians will sing, "All nations will worship before you (God), and your righteous acts have been revealed." as it says in Revelations 15:3-5. It is only through Christ that we can be assured all suffering will be alleviated, that the problem of evil will be solved, and that God will redeem people of all nations.

**Walter:** Such a God, who alleviates the pain of some, yet sends the rest to hell, is a God of hate, not of love...

**Charles:** But God is the standard. You are essentially begging for the concept of hell if you want to see cosmic justice be administered to Hitler and sadistic slave masters. Without a concept of hell, they get away free. But God promises justice to the wicked and eternal life to the righteous. But, none are righteous. Humanity and history have shown no one is perfect, and that we are enemies to God and ourselves. 1 Peter 2:22, 2 Corinthians 5:21, and 1 Peter 3:18 support that only Jesus is perfect, and we can only trust He suffered for our sin to bring us to a loving God.



**Walter:** You can still think fast on your feet, man. I am a little moved. You know all these years, I never heard you preach.

**Charles (laughing):** You never wanted to.

**Walter (calmly):** You are right.

**Charles:** You should visit us in Marietta, we would love to have your family visit and attend worship with us.

**Walter:** Not so fast, we have a lot more to discuss.  
**(several seconds of awkward silence)**

**Charles:** We will...but, for now, let's talk football and cars.

**Walter:** Ok, but I don't think we will agree on that either.

**Charles:** Maybe not, but how 'bout the suffering of those Cowboys?!

**Walter:** Oh brother, here you go...

## Further Reading:

- The Reason for God by Timothy Keller, pgs. 109-111 (Dutton, 2008)
- Jesus and the Disinherited by Howard Thurman, pgs. 114 (Friends United Press Edition, 1981)
- God of the Oppressed by James H. Cone pgs 42-45 (Orbis Books, 1997)
- Apologetics Study Bible pg. 121-123 (Holman Bible Publishers 2007)
- Is God a white racist? By William Jones (Anchor Press, 1973)
- Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast and Italy by Robert C. Davis
- Apologetics to the Glory of God by John M. Frame (P&R Publishing, 1994)
- Defending Black Faith by Craig S. Keener & Glen Usry (InterVarsity Press, 1997)



## **About the Author**

Cam Triggs loves Jesus. God saved Cam from wrath, sin, death, and Satan in 2005. He began studies at University of Central Florida as a Religious Studies major & continued his education at Reformed Theological Seminary where he earned a Masters of Arts in Theological Studies. During his time at RTS, Cam was privileged to study under the apologist John Frame. In the future, he looks forward to further study in the areas of philosophy, theology, and African American studies. He now enjoys loving God & loving students at Shiloh Church. More importantly, he is married to his beautiful best friend Tymara Triggs and the proud father of Cameron Triggs II. Stay connected with him at [camtriggs.com](http://camtriggs.com).



KNOW WHAT YOU BELIEVE AND WHY

[www.Jude3Project.com](http://www.Jude3Project.com)

   @Jude3Project